

2011 Testimony to the Judicial Committee

HB 6599: An Act Concerning Discrimination

Honorable Chairs, Senators and Representatives, my name is Jaclyn Garuti and I live and am a registered voter in New Hartford, Connecticut. I am a graduate student at the University of Connecticut School of Social Work in West Hartford and I would like to urge you to vote in favor of HB 6599: An Act Concerning Discrimination.

It is outlined in the NASW (National Association of Social Workers) *Code of Ethics* that as social workers, we “should engage in social and political action that seeks to ensure that all people have equal access to the resources, employment, services, and opportunities they require to meet their basic human needs and to develop fully.” Aside from my identity as a student studying social work or my ethical obligation to participate in political action that concerns any oppressed group, this bill is mostly important to me because it would provide better protection for my friend, Diana Lombardi.

Diana Lombardi is a peer of mine at the University of Connecticut School of Social Work. Diana is the first and only person I have ever known in my life to identify as transgendered. I have gotten to know Diana, both in and out of class and through her I have learned the significance of codifying HB 6599 into law, but more importantly, I have gotten to know her as a person. Diana has allowed me the opportunity to challenge what I thought I already knew about civil rights in our state, but I understand that not everyone has the chance to get to know someone like Diana. I have heard before that it has been evidenced through research that if you personally know someone from an oppressed population, you are much more likely to support policies that better protect such people. I know when I graduate and look for a job, I have the basic protections that prevent employers from discriminating against me based on my

gender, and if I suspect that I am being discriminated against based on my gender, I have the necessary protections that allow me to take action; Diana, however, does not enjoy this right.

Connecticut is a state that has been at the forefront of civil rights and is highly regarded as a state that practices progressive politics in order to ensure social and economic justice for all residents. Passing HB 6599 would add our state to a growing list of states (more than 100 cities, 13 states, and Washington D.C.) which have already put this protection into law. At the heart of HB 6599, is a bill that concerns a most fundamental civil right. A. Philip Randolph, a leader in the African American Civil Rights Movement once said, "A Community is democratic only when the humblest and weakest person can enjoy the highest civil, economic, and social rights that the biggest and most powerful possess." Voting in favor of HB 6599: An Act Concerning Discrimination is a step forward in helping to guarantee that all residents in Connecticut are fairly and equally protected under the law, and that all residents have a fair chance to secure employment and housing; basic needs which allow us to enjoy productive and successful lives.

Thank you.